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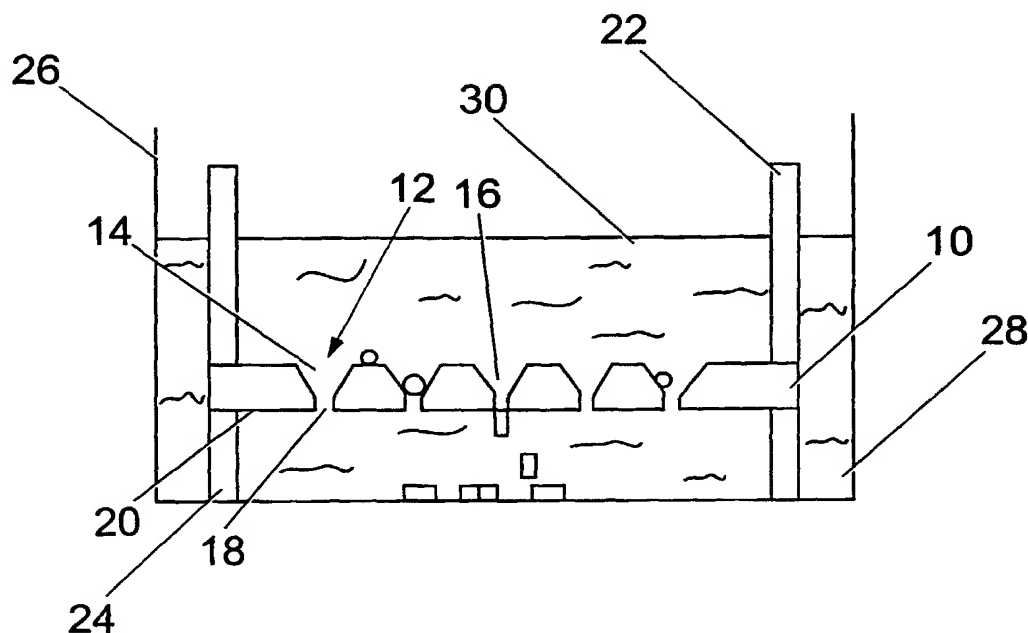
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(54) Title: A CELL MIGRATION AND CHEMOTAXIS CHAMBER



(57) Abstract: The invention relates to a device for use in investigating and measuring migratory and invasive behaviour of cells and in the investigating of potential drugs and for clonal selection of cells from a mixed population. The device comprises a planar member such as a silicon wafer defining passageway(s) for cell movement where changes in physical parameters can be detected by means such as conductors.



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1 **"A Cell Migration and Chemotaxis Chamber"**

2

3 This invention relates to a cell migration and
4 chemotaxis chamber for use in investigating and
5 measuring the migratory and invasive behaviour of
6 cells, and in the investigation of potential drugs, and
7 to a method for producing such a chamber.

8

9 It is recognised that many of the most successful
10 therapeutic drugs have, in the past, been found
11 serendipitously. Given the millions of chemicals
12 synthesised or extracted over the years it is expected
13 that unsuspected potential drugs are to be found in
14 this vast resource. To address this problem, many labs
15 began to adopt a stochastic screening programme in
16 which libraries of chemical compounds or natural
17 products are tested for activity in robotic
18 laboratories.

19

20 For example, the National Cancer Institute holds
21 130,000 discrete extracts from plants, marine
22 invertebrates and micro-organisms which it tests for
23 effects on the growth of cancer cells or HIV (in its

1 anti-AIDS programme). However, apart from the
2 important high through put screening methods for cell
3 growth and cell death, the only other such screening
4 methods available are dedicated to assaying drug
5 effects on single oncogenes - for example the ability
6 of a drug to bind to a cell surface receptor like the
7 EGF receptor.

8

9 There is currently no automated screening method for
10 cell migration nor for the invasive behaviour of cancer
11 cells.

12

13 Assessment of the effects of potential drugs on cell
14 migration is important in diseases where angiogenesis
15 is involved. A second aspect of cell migratory
16 behaviour, invasiveness, is important in cancer
17 metastasis, where cancer cells migrate into and invade
18 new tissue. Assessment of migratory behaviour is also
19 important in basic research areas such as developmental
20 biology, immunology and the like.

21

22 Angiogenesis is the formation of new blood vessels.
23 Angiogenesis is utterly dependent upon the directional
24 migration of endothelial cells towards the source of
25 some angiogenic stimulating factor (chemotaxis). It is
26 widely accepted that angiogenesis is an important
27 target in a number of common diseases. For example,
28 cancer metastasis, diabetic retinopathy, psoriasis and
29 rheumatoid arthritis are all dependent on angiogenesis
30 for their progression and could be treated by agents
31 which inhibit angiogenesis. On the other hand, it
32 would be desirable to screen for factors that promote

1 angiogenesis in the treatment of coronary artery and
2 peripheral artery disease.

3

4 In vivo tests for angiogenic factors are expensive,
5 time-consuming and provide few replicates (for example,
6 the rabbit corneal pouch assay and the chick
7 chorioallantoic membrane assay). Current in vitro
8 screens for potential anti-angiogens are mostly
9 dependent on measuring inhibition of cell migration
10 towards an angiogenic stimulus such as cancer cell
11 growth factors like EGF. However, these assays do not
12 lend themselves to automation. Furthermore, even for
13 manual basic research purposes the current assays are
14 inefficient. Three main assays are in use:

15

16 1. The Boyden Chamber (and its modifications) consists
17 of an upper chamber separated from a bottom chamber by
18 a plastic membrane (typically polycarbonate) which has
19 8 μm pores in it. To assess chemotaxis, tissue culture
20 medium containing chemoattractant is placed in the
21 bottom chamber and medium containing cells is placed in
22 the top chamber. The cells will then migrate towards
23 the source of chemoattractant by squeezing through the
24 pores (an animal cell is 20 μm in diameter: cells cannot
25 simply fall through the pores, but must use energy to
26 locomote through). To measure chemoinvasion, the pores
27 are first plugged with an extracellular matrix protein
28 (like collagen). In this case, the cells must degrade
29 the protein before they can pass through the pores.

30

31 1.2 Advantages

1 A large number of cells are monitored in each Boyden
2 Chamber (1000-1 million), giving a more reliable
3 estimate of drug effects. The assay does measure
4 directional migration ("Chemotaxis"). Many replicates
5 are possible, particularly when using inexpensive
6 plastic disposable versions of the Boyden Chamber.

7

8 1.3 Problems

9 1.3a The main problem with the Boyden Chamber method is
10 its quantification. Cells which migrate do not drop to
11 the bottom of the chamber, but instead stick to and
12 colonise the underside of the plastic membrane. In
13 order to quantify migrated cells, the cells on the
14 upper surface must first be carefully removed by
15 scraping with a cotton bud. The membranes are delicate
16 and easily punctured. The membrane is then stained
17 with crystal violet (or some other cell stain) and the
18 cells are either counted manually (using a microscope)
19 or the cell-associated stain is re-dissolved and
20 measured in a spectrophotometer. Manual cell counting
21 is tedious and prone to operator error. Colorimetric
22 assay of dye depends on there being sufficient numbers
23 of invading cells (at least 1000) and is subject to
24 interference because such dyes often bind to the
25 proteins used to plug the pores, leading to
26 unacceptably high background.

27

28 Cells will eventually fully colonise the underside of
29 the membrane, and it is at this point that they start
30 to drop off and fall to the bottom chamber where they
31 can be stained and counted more easily. However, this
32 typically takes a week, by which time a great deal of

1 cell division has occurred, particularly in the bottom
2 chamber containing the growth factor. So, in this
3 case, the number of cells in the bottom is a result of
4 not just migration but also cell division.

5
6 1.3b) A second problem with the Boyden Chamber is that
7 it is a 'snap-shot'. That is, one knows how many cells
8 migrate under treatment conditions compared with
9 control but one has no idea of how fast the cells
10 migrate. For example in a 48 hour migration assay both
11 control and treatment membranes are fixed at 48 hours.
12 All the cells might have migrated in the first 2 hours
13 with no further movement in the following 46 hours, but
14 the Boyden Chamber Assay will give no information on
15 this.

16
17 1.3c) The polycarbonate membrane fabrication process
18 does not guarantee a fixed number of pores per chamber.

19
20 1.3d) Re-usable Boyden Chambers are difficult to re-
21 assemble - air bubbles often become trapped and it is
22 easy to puncture new membranes. Disposable Boyden
23 Chambers are similarly prone to membrane punctures.

24
25 2) The Dunn Chamber
26 The Dunn Chamber aims to address the problem of cell
27 migration speeds. It consists of a specially
28 constructed microspore slide with a central circular
29 sink and a concentric annular moat. In this assay
30 cells migrate on a coverslip (which is placed inverted
31 on the Dunn Chamber) towards a chemotactic chemical.
32 The cells are monitored over-night using a phase-

1 contrast microscope fitted with a video camera
2 connected to a computer with image-grabber board. The
3 microscope must have a heated stage and is usually
4 fitted with an automatic electronic iris on its
5 condenser.

6

7 2.1 Advantages

8 The Dunn Chamber measures directional migration
9 continuously by means of time-lapse.

10

11 2.2) Problems

12 2.2a) A major problem with the Dunn Chamber Assay is
13 that a very small number of cells are monitored
14 (typically ten). This is a very small sample and
15 average behaviour of this small sample may not
16 therefore be typical of the population as a whole.

17

18 2.2b) A second major problem is that replication is
19 very restricted. Each control chamber and each
20 treatment chamber must be viewed in separate
21 microscopes, each one similarly equipped with camera
22 and computer. Each videomicroscopy unit would cost
23 £20,000. So, to do three controls and three treatments
24 would require an investment of £120,000, as experiments
25 should ideally be performed on the same cell harvest
26 and on the same day.

27

28 2.2c) Interpretation of the stored images requires
29 bespoke software and a skilled operator. Present
30 version of software requires manual logging of each
31 cell's centre on each frame of the time-lapse video.
32 This is highly time-consuming.

1 3. The Albrecht-Buhler Phagokinetic Track Assay
2 An earlier cell motility/migration assay is, like the
3 Dunn Chamber, dependent on measuring the tracks of
4 cells. In this assay, coverslips are coated with
5 colloidal gold particles. Cells are allowed to
6 locomote over this gold lawn overnight. The cells
7 clear tracks during their migration and the area of
8 tracks gives an indication of the speed of motility.

9

10 3.1) Advantages

11 Many replicates are possible due to the cheapness of
12 the assay. Only one microscope is required. Analysis
13 is time-consuming unless automated image analysis is
14 used. Although not monitored continuously, the cells
15 leave a record of their overnight activity.

16

17 3.2) Problems

18 3.2a) The main problem with the Phagokinetic Track
19 Assay is that it does not measure chemotaxis. Movement
20 may be stimulated or inhibited, but the movement is
21 random.

22

23 3.2b) A second major problem is that the cells ingest
24 some of the gold particles. This is clearly not
25 physiologically appropriate and it is unknown what
26 effect this has on cells' behaviour or responses to
27 added agents.

28

29 3.2c) A third difficulty with the assay is that the
30 physical chemistry required to produce the gold colloid
31 is difficult to replicate and scale-up. Differing

1 densities of gold coating and variation in particle
2 size are encountered from batch to batch.

3

4 3.3d) Finally, cells often back-track, covering the
5 same path more than once. So the observed track is not
6 necessarily a true record of the cell's activity.

7

8 An object of the present invention is to solve or
9 mitigate some of the above problems, particularly those
10 relating to low numbers of replicates, expense and
11 requirement for labour intensive and skilled
12 interpretation and technical expertise.

13

14 According to the present invention there is provided a
15 device for assessing cell migration, comprising a
16 planar member presenting at least one passageway having
17 a minimum dimension less than the cross-section of the
18 cells of interest through which such cells can be
19 caused to locomote, said passageway(s) being formed by
20 etching a material which allows an aperture with a
21 geometry which prevents adherence of the cells to the
22 underside of the planar member.

23

24 Preferably, an array of passageways is provided,
25 suitably a 10 x 10 array.

26

27 The planar member is preferably a silicon wafer, which
28 may suitably be about 525 microns thick.

29

30 Said passageways are preferably etched to have the form
31 of a hopper extending from a top surface and
32 terminating in an aperture. Typically, the top of the

1 hopper will be a square of 700 microns per side, and
2 the aperture will be a pore of about 8 microns per
3 side.

4

5 Preferably, the device comprises the silicon wafer held
6 between an upper cup into which a cell culture may be
7 introduced, and a lower stand suitable for being
8 received in a cluster plate well.

9

10 In one form of the invention, the silicon wafer is
11 provided with means for sensing the passage of cells
12 through the apertures. Said means may detect changes
13 in a physical parameter, such as an electrical or
14 optical criterion, as the cells pass. In one form,
15 arrays of conductors are formed on the upper and lower
16 surfaces of the wafers and disposed for sensing changes
17 in an electrical parameter (such as resistance or
18 capacitance) between conductors as cells pass through
19 the apertures.

20

21 From another aspect, the present invention provides a
22 method of making a planar member for use in a cell
23 migration assessment device, the method comprising the
24 steps of providing a planar member in the form of a
25 wafer;

26

27 applying a resist pattern to an upper surface of
28 the wafer to define an array of relatively large
29 surface areas;

30

31 etching the upper surface for a time sufficient to
32 expose the silicon in said array;

1 applying a resist pattern to a lower surface of
2 the wafer to define a matching array of relatively
3 small surface areas;
4
5 etching the lower surface for a time sufficient to
6 expose the silicon in said surface areas; and
7
8 etching the exposed silicon at both surfaces to
9 produce hopper-shaped openings from the top
10 surface and connecting holes or pores through the
11 bottom surface.
12
13 Typically, the wafer is of silicon, and the method is
14 carried out using techniques known from processing of
15 silicon integrated circuits.
16
17 The method may further comprise laying down a pattern
18 of conductors on one or both surfaces for use in
19 measuring an electrical parameter associated with each
20 hole.
21
22 The invention further provides the use of a device as
23 described herein for the selection of highly motile or
24 invasive cells from a mixed population. This use can
25 typically encompass clonal selection of cells.
26
27 Embodiments of the present invention will now be
28 described, by way of example only, with reference to
29 the drawings, in which:
30
31 Figure 1 is a perspective view of one form of
32 chamber in accordance with the present invention;

1 Figure 2 illustrates the chamber of Figure 1 in
2 use;

3
4 Figure 3 is a schematic cross section
5 corresponding to Figure 2;

6
7 Figures 4a to 4e represents schematically stages
8 in the production of part of the apparatus in
9 Figures 1-3, and Fig. 5 is a schematic plan view
10 illustrating a second embodiment; and

11
12 Figure 5 is a schematic plan view illustrating a
13 second embodiment.

14
15 Referring to Figures 1-3, a cell migration and
16 chemotaxis chamber consists of a silicon wafer 10 in
17 which a 10mm X 10mm array of one hundred holes 12 have
18 been etched. On the upper surface 14 the holes are
19 700 μ m square cross-section leading, via a hollow
20 inverted pyramidal 'hopper' 16, to a 8 μ m diameter exit
21 pore 18 on the lower surface 20. The wafer 10 is
22 sealed into a glass or plastic chamber, with an upper
23 cup 22 and a lower stand 24. The chamber is designed
24 to fit into standard disposable tissue culture cluster
25 plates (12-well), and is used like a Boyden Chamber.
26 The chamber is placed in a cluster plate well 26
27 containing the medium plus chemoattractant 28 and the
28 cells in control or drug-containing medium 30 is placed
29 in the upper cup 22 above the silicon wafer 10. At the
30 end of the experiment, the chamber is simply lifted out
31 of the plate and the migrated cells (left behind in the

1 cluster plate well 26) are fixed, stained and cell-
2 associated stain can be re-dissolved and read in a
3 spectrophotometer.

4 The foregoing embodiment has the following advantages:

5

6 The cells do not stick to the lower surface 20 of the
7 silicon wafer 10, but instead drop to the floor of the
8 cluster plate well 26. This means that the upper
9 surface 14 does not need to be scraped with a cotton
10 bud (as is the case with the Boyden Chamber).

11

12 Since all the migrated cells are at the bottom of the
13 cluster plate well 26, it is easy to fix and stain them
14 allowing colorimetric assay of cell numbers.

15

16 Since the cells do not stick to the undersurface 20 of
17 the wafer 10, non-specific staining of protein coatings
18 does not interfere (as is the case with the Boyden
19 Chamber).

20

21 Cells of interest will typically adhere to a plane
22 silicon surface. It is believed that they do not
23 adhere to the underside of the wafer 10 because of the
24 hole geometry. The mechanism is not at present fully
25 understood, but it is thought that the exit pore 18
26 joining the lower face 20 in a relatively sharp edge is
27 of significance.

28

29 A glass chamber of this embodiment can be re-used
30 without difficult re-assembly (as is the case with the
31 Boyden Chamber). To remove cells it is boiled in 5%
32 tissue culture detergent then washed in distilled

1 water. It can then be re-sterilised by autoclave. If
2 production were scaled up and wafers were encased in
3 plastic chambers, they could be made cheap enough to be
4 disposable.

5
6 Each wafer 10 has exactly the same number of holes 12
7 with very precise dimensions, making chemoattractant
8 gradients between upper and lower wells more
9 predictable and uniform (than is the case with the
10 Boyden Chamber).

11
12 The uniformity of numbers, and consistent geometry of
13 the hoppers 16 and pores 18, would allow more
14 consistent and reproducible protein coating or plugging
15 of the wafer and/or pores 18.

16
17 The consistent geometry of the array would allow for
18 robotic dispensing of protein solutions into each
19 hopper using a suitable array of micro-pipettes.

20
21 Referring now to Figure 4 one example of a process for
22 producing the silicon wafer of the foregoing embodiment
23 will now be described.

24
25 The starting material (Fig. 4A) was 4 inch diameter, n-
26 type silicon wafers, <100> orientation, 9-16 ohm-cm
27 resistivity, polished both sides and 525 μm thick.

28
29 The wafers were cleaned and coated with a 220 nm thick
30 layer of LPCVD silicon nitride on all sides. Positive
31 photoresist was deposited on the top side, prebaked and

1 exposed to UV light through an appropriately patterned
2 chrome photo mask. The mask is aligned so that the
3 edges of the square patterns lie along the 100
4 directions. The exposed photoresist was developed to
5 remove the resist from the square patterns. After
6 baking the photoresist, the square patterns were
7 reactive ion etched through the exposed silicon nitride
8 on the top side. The photoresist was removed, and the
9 wafers cleaned in a megasonic bath and then annealed at
10 1000°C in N₂ for ten minutes (Fig. 4B).

11
12 The bottom side of the wafer was coated with
13 photoresist, which was pre-baked and exposed to UV
14 light through a second patterned chrome photo mask.
15 This second mask was aligned to the pattern on the
16 other side of the wafer using an Electronic Visions
17 EV420 double side mask aligner. The pattern was
18 reactive ion etched through the nitride to expose the
19 silicon (Fig. 4C).

20
21 The silicon was anisotropically etched in a ternary
22 mixture of KOH (50gm), IPA (51 cc) and DI-H₂O (162 cc)
23 at 80 ± 1°C in a lufran super bowl reflux system. This
24 etch attacks the <100> planes at a much faster rate
25 than the <111> planes to produce inverted square
26 pyramid-like wells. The etching which took place from
27 both sides was stopped once the wells from the two
28 sides had met (Fig. 4D). This took about 5 hours. The
29 silicon nitride layer was removed by wet chemistry and
30 the wafer oxidised at 1050°C for one hour to grow a
31 surface silicon dioxide layer of 100 nm (Fig. 4E). The

1 silicon wafer was then diced into 10mm square die to
2 produce a number of Chambers.

3 A second type of a chamber in accordance with the
4 invention will now be described.

5

6 This is designed to allow remote and continuous
7 monitoring of cell migration with time. Emergence of a
8 cell though each pore might be monitored in several
9 different ways. Optical methods might be possible, but
10 since cells are transparent it is likely that the cells
11 would have to be dyed or fluorescently labelled which
12 would be non-physiological. It is likely that
13 electrical methods would be the most economical way to
14 do this. For example changes in electrical resistance
15 or capacitance would be sensed as a cell blocked the
16 pore.

17

18 Based on this idea, the chamber of a further embodiment
19 (Fig. 5) consists of a silicon chip resembling the
20 first embodiment. In Figure 5, parts similar to those
21 of the first embodiment are denoted by the same
22 reference numerals. In this embodiment, however, upper
23 and lower sets of conductors 50 and 52 are deposited on
24 the surfaces 14 and 20 to allow detection of cells as
25 they pass through each of the lower 8 μm exit holes 18.
26 Detection may be most easily achieved by measuring the
27 change in electrical resistance as the cell blocks the
28 hole 18 separating adjacent ones of the upper and lower
29 conductors 50, 52. This could be detected as a
30 resistance to the flow of electrical current between
31 top and bottom conductors. The current would not be

1 continuous, but only applied momentarily when the array
2 is being 'interrogated'. The array would be repeatedly
3 scanned so that data is logged, with time, for each
4 individual hole.

5

6 This arrangement means that cell migration can be
7 monitored automatically and continuously during the
8 experiment, rather than providing a mere 'snap-shot'

9

10 Cells do not have to be stained, removing the need for
11 calibration of each cell-line (various cell types take
12 up varying amounts of dye per cells) and removing
13 interference from staining of coating protein.

14

15 The remote sensing capability of this embodiment
16 combined with the low costs of silicon chip
17 manufacturing mean that this method could be used in
18 robotic drug screening.

19

20 Modifications may be made to the embodiments within the
21 scope of the present invention.

1 **CLAIMS**

2

3 1. A device for assessing cell migration, comprising
4 a planar member presenting at least one passageway
5 having a minimum dimension less than the cross-
6 section of the cells of interest through which
7 such cells can be caused to locomote, said
8 passageway(s) being formed by etching a material
9 which allows an aperture with a geometry which
10 prevents adherence of the cells to the underside
11 of the planar member.

12

13 2. A device as claimed in claim 1 wherein an array of
14 passageways is provided.

15

16 3. A device as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein the
17 planar member is a silicon wafer.

18

19 4. A device as claimed in any of the preceding claims
20 wherein said passageway(s) are etched to have the
21 form of a hopper extending from a top surface and
22 terminating in an aperture.

23

24 5. A device as claimed in any preceding claims
25 wherein the planar member is a silicon wafer and
26 the silicon wafer is held between an upper cup
27 into which a cell culture may be introduced, and a
28 lower stand suitable for being received in a
29 cluster plate well.

30

31 6. A device as claimed in any preceding claim wherein
32 the silicon wafer is provided with means for

1 sensing the passage of cells through the apertures
2 wherein said means detect changes in a physical
3 parameter as the cells pass.
4

5 7. A device as claimed in claim 6 wherein arrays of
6 conductors are formed on the upper and lower
7 surfaces of the wafers and disposed for sensing
8 changes in an electrical parameter between
9 conductors as cells pass through the apertures.
10

11 8. A method of making a planar member for use in a
12 cell migration assessment device, the method
13 comprising the steps of providing a planar member
14 in the form of a wafer;
15

16 applying a resist pattern to an upper surface of
17 the wafer to define an array of relatively large
18 surface areas;
19

20 etching the upper surface for a time sufficient to
21 expose the silicon in said array;
22

23 applying a resist pattern to a lower surface of
24 the wafer to define a matching array of relatively
25 small surface areas;
26

27 etching the lower surface for a time sufficient to
28 expose the silicon in said surface areas; and
29

30 etching the exposed silicon at both surfaces to
31 produce hopper-shaped openings from the top

- 1 surface and connecting holes or pores through the
2 bottom surface.
3
- 4 9. A method as claimed in claim 8 wherein the wafer
5 is of silicon.
6
- 7 10. A method as claimed in claim 8 or 9 wherein the
8 method further comprises laying down a pattern of
9 conductors on one or both surfaces for use in
10 measuring an electrical parameter associated with
11 each hole.
12
- 13 11. Use of a device as claimed in any of claims 1 to 7
14 for selection of highly motile or invasive cells.

1 / 4

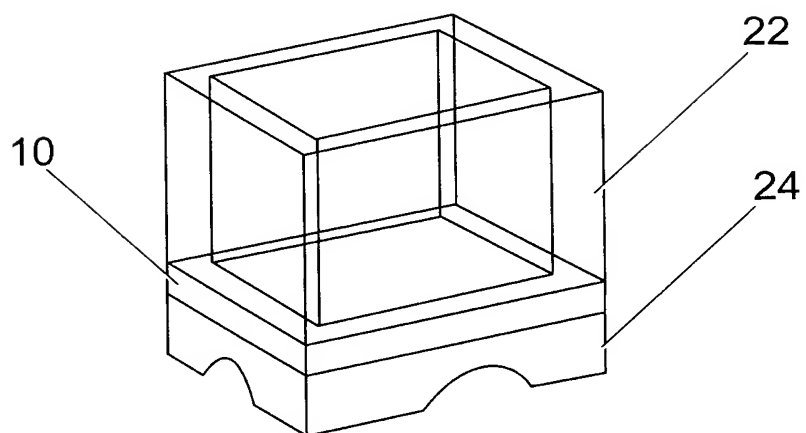
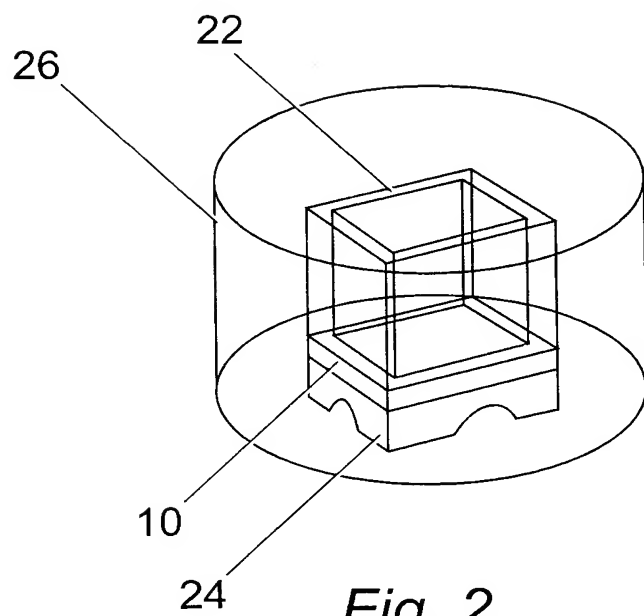
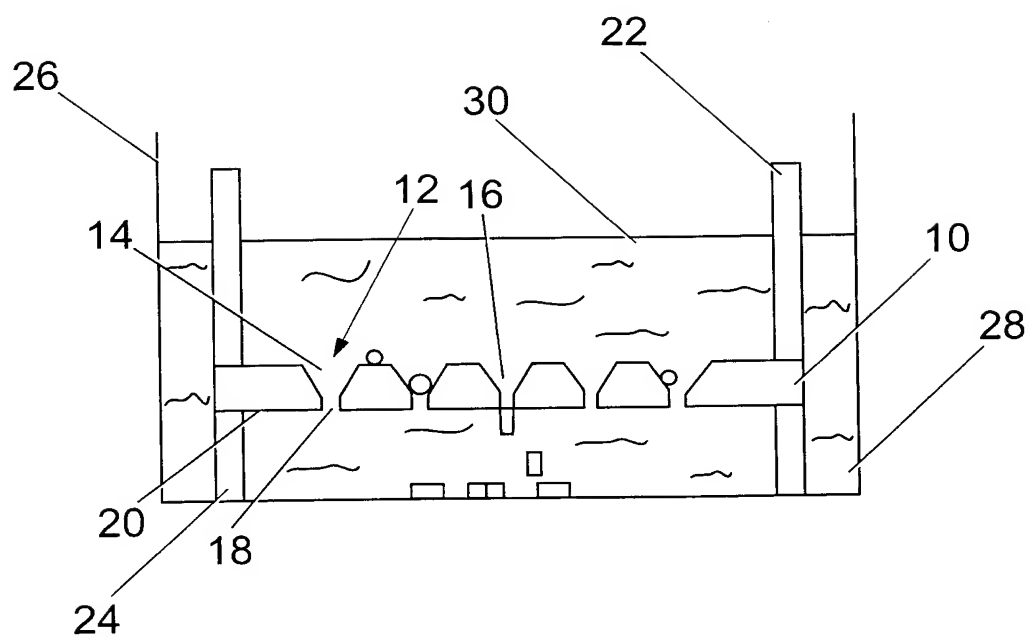
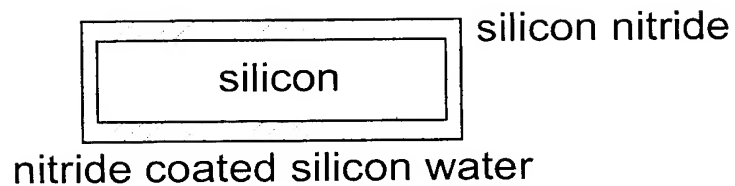
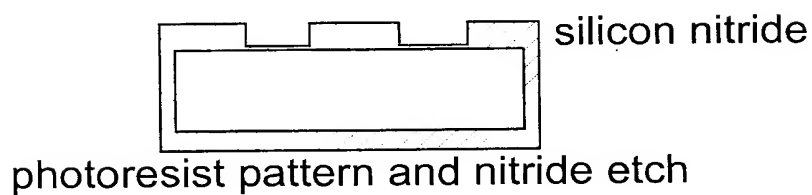
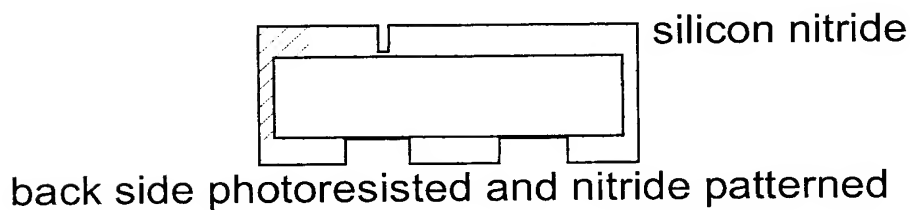
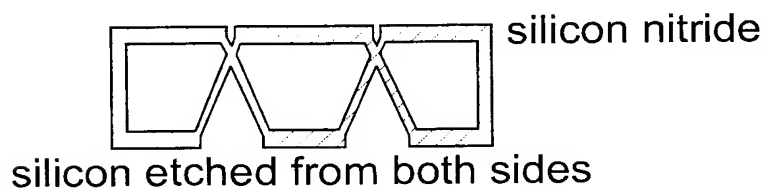
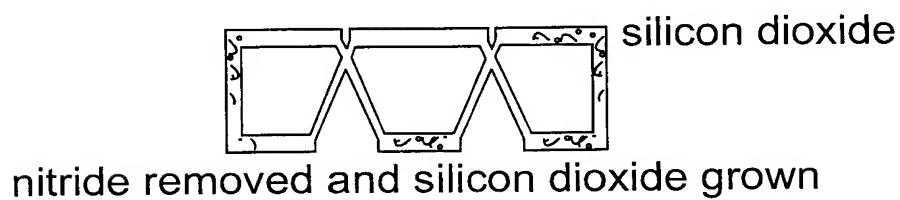


Fig. 1

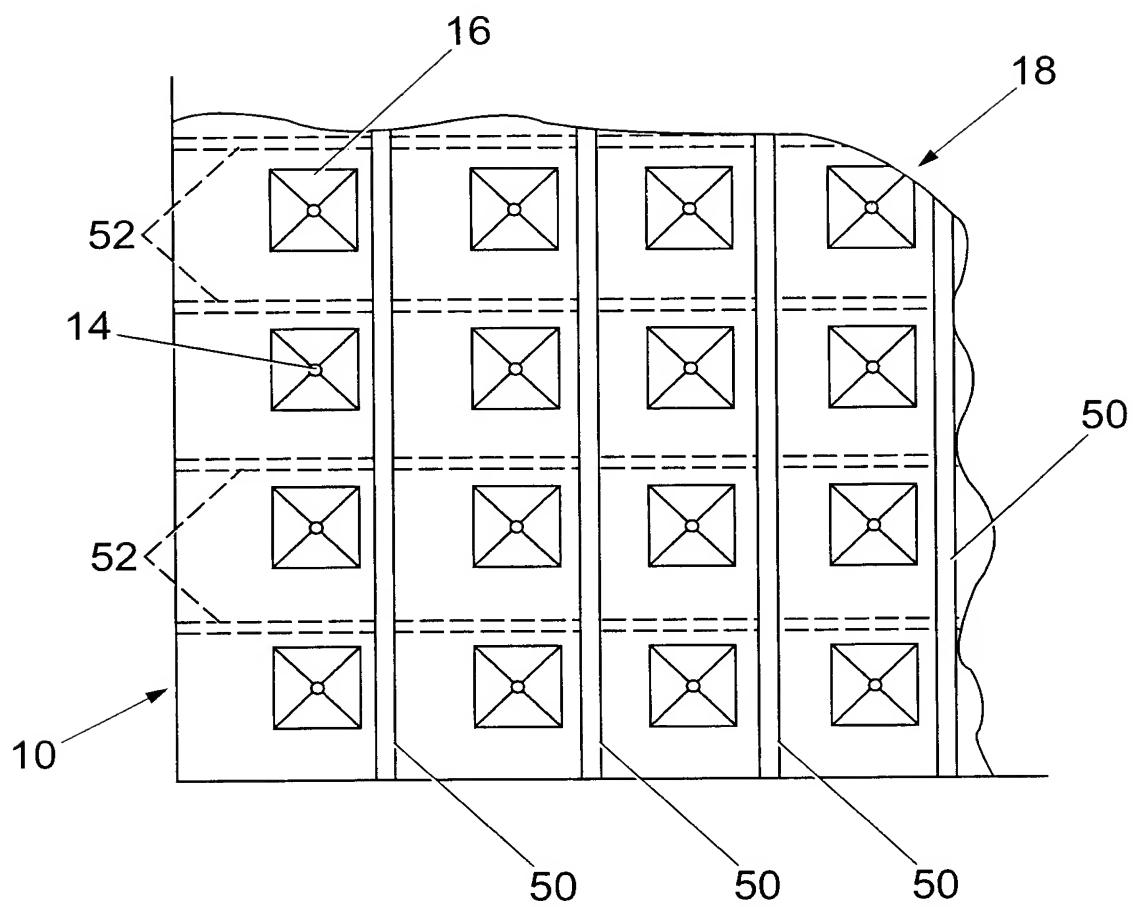
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*Fig. 3*

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*Fig. 4A**Fig. 4B**Fig. 4C**Fig. 4D**Fig. 4E*

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*Fig. 5*

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

i. National Application No

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
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According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

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IPC 7 C12M

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category ° | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
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| X | US 4 729 949 A (DEUTSCH MORDECHAI ET AL) 8 March 1988 (1988-03-08) column 7, line 52; claims; figures column 24, line 47 - line 66 column 7, line 9 --- | 1-11 |
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Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

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Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/GB 00/04213

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